

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /026 W
----- 016512

R 141814Z MAY 75
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9390
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY BONN
USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 12231

EXDIS

DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS DOD FOR SECRETARY SCHLESINGER
AND USNMR SHAPE FOR GENERAL HAIG

E.O. 11652: XGDS1
TAGS: PFOR' MNUC, MPOL, FR
SUBJECT: MEETING WITH FRENCH MOD BOURGES MAY 13

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: IN MY FIRST EXTENSIVE SUBSTANTIVE MEETING WITH GOF DEFENSE MINISTER BOURGES, OUR WIDE-RANGING DISCUSSION COVERED U.S. RELIABILITY IN THE WAKE OF VIETNAM, THE NEED TO MAINTAIN U.S. FORCES IN EUROPE, THE FUTURE OF THE U.S. NUCLEAR COMMITMENT TO EUROPE, FRANCO-AMERICAN MILITARY RELATIONS, AND THE CONCEPT OF A EUROPEAN DEFENSE STRUCTURE. BOURGES WAS IN TOTAL COMMAND OF THE SUBSTANCE THAT WE DISCUSSED, AND PUT FORWARD HIS VIEWS IN A CANDID AND ARTICULATE FASHION. BOURGES INVITED SECRETARY SCHLESINGER TO VISIT PARIS (SEPTTEL).
END SUMMARY.

2. VIETNAM:

BOURGES SAID THAT NOTHING IS FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH THAN TO SAY THAT THE U.S. WAS MILITARILY DEFEATED IN VIETNAM. THE U.S. HAD NOT COMMITTED EVEN "ONE PERCENT OR
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ONE-TENTH OF ONE PERCENT" OF ITS MILITARY MIGHT IN SOUTH-

EAST ASIA. CONSEQUENTLY, HE SAID, FROM A MILITARY POINT OF VIEW, THE RECENT EVENTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA DID NOT SHAKE HIS CONFIDENCE IN THE POWER OF THE U.S. FROM A POLITICAL POINT OF VIEW, HOWEVER, HE SPECULATED THAT THE VIETNAM EPISODE MIGHT HAVE A PROFOUND IMPACT ON THE DETERMINATION OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE TO SAFEGUARD THEIR VITAL NATIONAL INTERESTS ABROAD. I REPLIED THAT THE REALITY OF AMERICAN INTERESTS IN EUROPE HAS NOT CHANGED AS A RESULT OF THE EVENTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. BOTH THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE WOULD CONTINUE TO UNDERSTAND THE DIMENSION OF THEIR VITAL INTEREST IN THE CONTINUED SECURITY OF WESTERN EUROPE. I ADDED THAT OUR DETERMINATION TO MAINTAIN 300,000 TROOPS IN EUROPE DEMONSTRATES THIS RESOLVE.

3. U.S. TROOPS IN EUROPE:

PICKING UP MY COMMENT ON MAINTAINING OUR FORCES IN EUROPE, BOURGES SAID THAT NO ONE SHOULD DOUBT THE PROFOUND TIES THAT EXIST BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE. NEVERTHELESS, IN THE WAKE OF VIETNAM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE MAY BE ATTRACTED TO THE IDEA THAT U.S. NUCLEAR WEAPONS ARE ONLY TO BE USED FOR THE DEFENSE OF U.S. TERRITORY. WITH THIS IN MIND, HE CONTINUED, IT IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER THAT THE U.S. MAINTAIN ITS TROOPS IN EUROPE TO SHOW TO THE SOVIETS -- AS WELL AS THE WESTERN EUROPEANS -- THAT THE U.S. INTENDS TO KEEP ITS ULTIMATE STRATEGIC NUCLEAR DETERRENT COUPLED TO THE DEFENSE OF EUROPE IN AN UNAMBIGUOUS WAY. WITHOUT CONTRADICTING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL VALUE OF MAINTAINING OUR TROOPS IN EUROPE, I UNDERLINED THE VERY REAL MILITARY REASONS FOR MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING NATO'S CREDIBLE CONVENTIONAL DEFENSE, WHICH MUST INCLUDE U.S. FORCES IN EUROPE AT THEIR CURRENT LEVEL.

4. U.S. NUCLEAR COMMITMENT TO EUROPE:

IN ANALYZING THE MEANING OF THE VLADIVOSTOK SALT AGREEMENT, BOURGES CONCLUDED THAT IT WAS IN THE INTEREST OF BOTH SUPER POWERS TO LIMIT THE NUMBER OF STRATEGIC

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NUCLEAR DELIVERY SYSTEMS ON EACH SIDE. SUCH A LIMITATION WOULD EASE THE PRESSURES ON EACH COUNTRY'S DEFENSE BUDGET AND WOULD PUT AN END TO THE POTENTIALLY DE-STABILIZING ESCALATION OF SOVIET AND AMERICAN STRATEGIC NUCLEAR WEAPONS. BUT, HE ADDED, WHILE THESE CONSIDERATIONS WERE UNDERSTANDABLE TO THE FRENCH, HE PERSONALLY REMAINED CONCERNED THAT THE SOVIETS WOULD CONCLUDE THAT THE VLADIVOSTOK ACCORD EFFECTIVELY

NEUTRALIZED THE LINKAGE OF U.S. STRATEGIC FORCES TO THE

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DEFENSE OF EUROPE. HE REPEATED THIS "DE-COUPLING" CONCERN SEVERAL TIMES -- BOTH IN CONNECTION WITH SALT IN GENERAL AND VLADIVOSTOK IN PARTICULAR, AND IN CONNECTION WITH THE NEED TO MAINTAIN U.S. TROOPS IN EUROPE AS DESCRIBED ABOVE IN PARA 3.

5. FRANCO-AMERICAN MILITARY RELATIONS:

BOURGES SAID THAT A MAJOR IMPROVEMENT NEEDS TO BE MADE IN THE EXCHANGE OF MILITARY INFORMATION BETWEEN FRANCE AND THE U.S., AND BETWEEN FRANCE AND NATO. WITHOUT GOING INTO SPECIFICS, HE NOTED THAT THE SENSITIVE AND CLOSELY GUARDED DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN GENERAL HAIG AND GENERAL MAURIN WERE A WELCOME SIGN THAT BOTH SIDES RECOGNIZED THIS PROBLEM AND WERE PREPARED TO UNDERTAKE THE ACTIONS NEEDED TO RESOLVE IT.

6. EUROPEAN DEFENSE STRUCTURE:

BOURGES SAID THAT IT IS DESIRABLE TO HAVE A "REAL,

AUTONOMOUS EUROPEAN DEFENSE CAPABILITY" THAT WOULD REST ON "INDEPENDENCE" OF DECISION. HE ADMITTED THAT THIS TYPE OF "AUTONOMOUS/INDEPENDENT" EUROPEAN DEFENSE WAS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO ORGANIZE FOR POLITICAL REASONS. THE UNITED STATES SHOULD NOT CONSIDER THAT EUROPE'S CONFIDENTIAL

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EFFORTS TO ORGANIZE ITS OWN DEFENSE ALONG THESE LINES WERE CONTRARY TO U.S. INTERESTS. ON THE CONTRARY, HE CONTINUED, THE U.S. SHOULD WELCOME THE STRONG AND RELIABLE EUROPEAN DEFENSE ELEMENT THAT NEEDS TO BE CREATED AS A REPLACEMENT TO THE WEAK AND DIVIDED CONDITION OF THE EUROPEAN ALLIES TODAY. I REPLIED THAT IT WAS DIFFICULT TO TALK OF THE NEED TO MAINTAIN THE U.S. DEFENSE COMMITMENT TO EUROPE -- INCLUDING THE PROVISION OF OUR STRATEGIC NUCLEAR UMBRELLA TO THE DEFENSE OF EUROPE -- AND AT THE SAME TIME TALK ABOUT "AUTONOMOUS/INDEPENDENT" CAPABILITIES AND DECISION-MAKING ON THE PART OF THE EUROPEANS. I STRESSED THAT THE INTER-DEPENDENCE OF WESTERN DEFENSE MUST REST ON NATO.

7. COMMENT: BASED ON MY SEVERAL DISCUSSIONS WITH BOURGES, IT IS CLEAR THAT HE IS IN FULL COMMAND OF THE KEY POLITICAL/MILITARY SUBJECTS OF FRANCE'S DEFENSE STRATEGY. NOT SURPRISINGLY, HE IS PREOCCUPIED WITH THE STRATEGIC NUCLEAR DIMENSION OF DETERRENCE AND DEFENSE, AND A GOOD DEAL LESS INTERESTED IN THE CONVENTIONAL ASPECTS OF DEFENSE. HIS REMARKS TO ME INVARIABLY HAVE BEEN FRANK AND REFLECT A COMMAND OF DETAILS AS WELL AS GENERALITIES. LIKE FORMER MOD GALLEY, HE IS A MAN WHO IS INTELLECTUALLY AND PASSIONATELY INTERESTED IN DEFENSE AFFAIRS. HE DISPLAYS NONE OF THE DISINTEREST THAT SOMETIMES CHARACTERIZED HIS PREDECESSOR SOUFFLET. CONSEQUENTLY, I BELIEVE HE IS A DEFENSE MINISTER WITH WHOM WE CAN ESTABLISH A CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE, ALTHOUGH WE ARE NO MORE LIKELY TO CHANGE HIS FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS OF DEFENSE THAN HE IS LIKELY TO CHANGE OURS. A FRANK AND ACTIVE U.S. DIALOGUE WITH BOURGES, HOWEVER, MAY WELL REVEAL LARGER AREAS OF COMMUNALITY BETWEEN FRENCH AND U.S. POLITICAL/MILITARY INTERESTS THAN GENERALLY HAS BEEN BELIEVED IN THE PAST TO BE THE CASE.
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